

# Rockville Board of Supervisors of Elections (BSE)

## Mayor and Council Update

Lois Neuman PhD, *Chair*

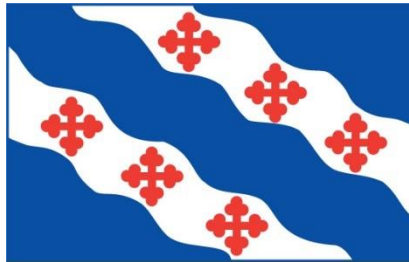
November 6, 2017

# Topics

- BSE Accomplishments: 2015 to Present
- Recommendation: Conduct 2019 Election as Vote by Mail (VBM)
  - Rationale
  - Rockville voter turnout history
  - Experience of states and jurisdictions
  - Rockville election costs
  - Advantages and possible concerns of VBM
  - Summary
- Recommended VBM Process
- Alternatives to VBM
- Next Steps
  - Mayor and Council
  - Board
- Conclusion

Failure to vote is not an act of  
rebellion;  
it's an act of surrender.

*Observed on a t-shirt while walking in a Rochester, Minnesota parade  
by Secretary of State Steve Simon (2015)*



# BSE Accomplishments: 2015 to Present

- Conducted Campaign Fund Report Survey
- Reviewed/Revised Standard Operating Procedures
  - Recount
  - Absentee Ballots
  - Provisional Ballots
  - Observers
  - Ballot Duplication
  - Pre-canvass
- Reviewed Campaign Fund Reports
- Conducted Second Election Administration Forum
- Reviewed City Code
- Began Research and Planning for 2019 Election

# 2019 Election Recommendation

## WHAT

- Conduct 2019 Election as VBM

## WHY

- “Meet people where they are”; take the vote to the voter
- Increase voter turnout
- Remove obstacles
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Keep database current – timely voter information
- Reduce expenses

# VBM Rationale

- Take ballot to the voter instead of voter to the ballot
- Increase voter turnout
- Improve voter experience
  - No lines
  - Save voter time and transportation costs
- Reduce expense
- Duplicate positive experience of VBM jurisdictions

# Rockville History of Voter Turnout

Election Year	Population	Registered Voters	Voted	
			Number	Percentage
2011	62,102	36,840	6,240	16.94
2013	63,736	40,494	6,685	16.51
2015	66,673	40,749	6,468	15.87

Turnout has declined regardless of the number of candidates or ballot question(s).

# VBM Elections

- At least 22 states allow certain elections to be conducted entirely by mail. For these elections, registered voters receive a ballot in the mail.
- As of January 2017, three of the 22 states hold all elections entirely by mail.

Oregon (2000)

Washington (2011)

Colorado (2013)

California (2016) will begin holding all-mail elections in 2018.

- Other states permit all-mail elections in certain circumstances (for example, by districts, municipal, unopposed).

*-Wendy Underhill, National Conference of State Legislatures*

[From www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/all-mail-elections.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/all-mail-elections.aspx)



# VBM Process

- Procedure

- The voter marks the ballot.
- They place the ballot into a separate mailing envelope.
  - In some jurisdictions, the voter puts the ballot in a secrecy envelope or sleeve that is placed into a separate mailing envelope.
- They sign an affidavit on the exterior of the mailing envelope.
- They return the package via mail or a drop-off location.

In Colorado, voters have the option to cast a ballot at an in-person vote center during the Early Voting period or on Election Day.

# VBM Process, continued

- Provides more options and better ways for voters to become involved in the voting process
- Three ways to return ballots
  - Mail (with bar codes)
  - Drop box
  - In person



# States/Jurisdictions Using VBM

- Oregon (all 2000)
- Washington (all 2011)
- Colorado (all 2013)
- California (counties 2014; all 2018)

## Those below, VBM in certain circumstances

- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Kansas (special elections)
- Maryland (special elections)
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- North Dakota
- Utah (jurisdictions may decide)
- Wyoming (counties may decide)



## Utah

- In the 2016 Presidential Election, all 21 counties that conducted their elections by mail saw greater turnout (79.3-92.7%) than any of the nine that held mixed or traditional elections (70.9-78.7).
- There appears to be little correlation between average voter turnout in the counties that provided postage and those that did not.

# Johnson County, KS – Special Elections Turnout 2005-2014

Voting Method	%
Polling Place	11.18-26.33
VBM	29.96-55.80

The highest turnout of a special election at a polling place is lower than the lowest turnout of a special election by VBM.

(Polling place special elections include the option for the voter to request an absentee ballot and also include one week of early voting.)

# Other Examples

- San Mateo County, CA
  - Local Election Turnout
    - 2013 25.4%
    - 2015 29.5% (with VBM)
- Alpine City, CA 2014 (fewer than 1,200 residents)
  - Least populous of California's 58 counties
  - 1989 instituted all VBM (limited mobility due to snow)
  - Strong community desire to participate
  - June 3, 2014 nearly 70% ballots cast in the least compelling gubernatorial primary in memory

# Comparison of Rockville and Three Cities in King County, WA on % of Ballots Cast

- King County, WA is the largest jurisdiction in the U.S. to conduct all elections by mail.
- A comparison of these three data points reveals similarities except, on the percent of ballots cast:
  - Registered Voters and Ballots Cast in the 2015 Election
  - Area Size and Population by Gender and Age\*
  - Population by Racial Makeup\*
- All King County cities show a larger percent of ballots cast compared to Rockville.

*\*Based on 2010 US Census Data*

# Rockville and Cities in King County, WA Comparison of Registered Voters and Ballots per 2015 Election

Cities	Active Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Percent Ballots Cast
City of Rockville	41,056	6,468	15.75
City of Renton	49,235	13,577	27.57
City of Federal Way	42,778	15,479	36.18
City of Redmond	28,164	10,740	38.13

*[From www.kingcounty.gov/depts/elections/about-us.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/elections/about-us.aspx)*



# Rockville and Cities in King County, WA Comparison by Area, Gender, and Age\*

Cities	Area Size Square miles	Gender % Male Female	Median Age Years	Age % 65 and older
City of Rockville	13.57	47.9 52.1	38.7	14
City of Renton	23.54	49.5 50.5	35.2	10
City of Federal Way	22.46	49.0 51.0	34.9	10
City of Redmond	16.94	50.9 49.1	34.1	9

*\*Based on 2010 US Census Data*

# Rockville and Cities in King County, WA Comparison by Racial Makeup\*

Cities	White	Non-Hispanic White	African American	Native American	Asian	Other Races	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino	Pacific Islander
City of Rockville	60.4	52.8	9.6	0.3	20.6	5.3	3.8	14.3	N/A
City of Renton	54.6	49.4	10.6	0.7	21.2	6.2	5.8	13.1	0.8
City of Federal Way	57.5	51.6	9.7	0.9	14.2	8.3	6.6	16.2	2.7
City of Redmond	65.2	N/A	1.7	0.4	25.4	3.2	4.0	7.8	0.2

*\*Based on 2010 US Census Data*

## Rockville 2015 Election Costs Summary

Description	Costs
Temporary Payroll Costs	\$ 42,973
Other Costs	\$ 61,894
Total	<b>\$104,867</b>

The City of Rockville was a pilot for Montgomery County in 2015, resulting in reduced costs.

# Rockville 2019 Projected Election Costs

- Reduced Cost  
Equipment  
Personnel  
Training
- Increased Cost  
Postage



# Advantages of VBM

- Voter convenience and satisfaction
  - Vote at home
  - Voters often express enthusiasm for all-mail elections
- Turnout
  - Expected increase based on experience of other jurisdictions. (Even though most VBM studies show turnout decreases after the novelty wears off, participation remains at a higher level than before VBM.)
- Financial savings
  - Fewer poll workers
  - Less equipment
  - No need for early voting

# Concerns

- Tradition
  - Voters show a preference for voting in the manner that is familiar to them.
- Disparate effect on some populations
  - May not have accurate street addresses
  - Written materials may be unclear
- Security
  - Coercion by family members or others
  - Drop box(es)
  - Returned ballots
- Integrity
- Ballots voted by addressee only
- Voter returns ballot by mail and votes in person on election day

*The new realities of voting by mail in 2016 (June 2016).  
Bipartisan Policy Center.*

# Recommended Process Based on Best Practices

- Develop and conduct strategic communication plan – change management.
- Operate an on-site Vote Center on Election Day.
- Develop ballot management processes - examples
  - Mail ballot 30-45 days prior to election to every eligible voter
  - Review received ballots
  - Canvass ballots and scan
  - Maintain paper trail

# Recommended Process

## Purpose of Vote Center on Election Day

- Tradition and convenience: Close at 8 P.M. when election ends
- Offer an in-person experience
- ADA compliance/privacy
- Replace lost or damaged ballot(s)
- Registration to the end of election
- Allow provisional voting if the issued ballot is unavailable





# Recommended Process

## Outreach to Voters

- Communication Campaign
  - Minimum of four pieces of communication
  - Voter Guide, sample ballot
  - Repetitive with constant information
  - Publicize the election
- Advocacy
  - Registration and registration changes
  - Importance of the election process
  - Voting

# Alternatives to VBM

- Similar to 2015
  - Poll worker training
  - Election Judges
  - Polling place selection
  - Equipment
  - Early voting
  - Scan results at County Board of Elections
  - Increased cost: Rockville is not a County pilot in 2019
- Hybrid 2015/2019
  - Limited poll worker training for fewer judges
  - Some polling places open
  - Equipment
  - VBM
  - Scan results at County Board of Elections
  - Increased cost

## Next Steps by Mayor and Council

- Request whatever additional information is required for a decision.
- Inform BSE of its final decision no later than March 2018.



# Next Steps by Board

- Respond to requests for information from the Mayor and Council.
- Continue planning for the 2019 Rockville Election.
- If the Mayor and Council approve VBM
  - Identify and recommend Code changes.
  - Identify budget requirements.
- Prepare security plan.
- Develop drop box and other SOPs.
  - Determine location of secure room for counting and storage center.
  - Determine equipment needs and process.
  - Create communication campaign .
  - Reserve rooms.
  - Communicate and plan with mailing contractor.

# Conclusion

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